



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Princeton University Library



32101 062167885

# VISIONS AND VIGNETTES OF WAR

MAURICE PONSONBY

4094

6

780

Library of



Princeton University.

PITNEY FUND  
EUROPEAN WAR









## **VISIONS AND VIGNETTES OF WAR**



# VISIONS AND VIGNETTES OF WAR

BY *George J. J. J. J.*  
**MAURICE PONSONBY**, 1886-  
CHAPLAIN TO THE FORCES DEC. 1914—OCT. 1917

UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

**LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.**  
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK  
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS  
1917

[illegible]

## INTRODUCTION

THE title of this book is its own explanation.

During a period of two years spent almost entirely with the fighting troops in France, and a further nine months in hospital, one has visions : certain aspects of truth grip the mind. These I have written down. But they are not clear-cut pictures, they are only vignettes. They will not appeal to him who wants his religion in a nutshell ; I hold religion to be a much bigger thing than that : neither will he who wishes for a cast-iron certainty have much use for them ; I do not myself believe that the spiritual can ever become so tangible : neither will they satisfy one who wants his thinking done for him and theories worked out to their logical conclusion, for in these days of desolation I doubt whether any such thing is possible or even desirable.

vii

JUN 18 1918

397633

## viii VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

They simply represent flashes of light which have from time to time leaped into the mind of one who has suffered and rejoiced, despaired and hoped again amid the horrors of war and the painful monotony of wounds and disease.

Some of my friends who have read them tell me that they will be of use to those who to-day are groping in the darkness and longing for some point of view which will satisfy the soul.

I have no greater hope than that this may be true.

M. P.

*September, 1917.*

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
ON GETTING A COMMISSION . . . . .	I
THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT . . . . .	6
A STRETCHER-BEARER AND A MORAL . . . . .	13
ON THE CLOTH HALL AT YPRES AND OTHER RUINS	19
FEAR . . . . .	28
CHRISTIANITY THE RELIGION OF COWARDS ? . . . . .	35
IS GOD ALMIGHTY ? . . . . .	41
THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN . . . . .	48
CONCERNING CHARMS . . . . .	54
THE ANGELS OF MONS AND OTHER MYTHS . . . . .	60
THE BATTLE OF LOOS . . . . .	70
OF A SERVICE I OVERHEARD AND THOUGHTS ARISING THEREFROM . . . . .	78
CONCERNING OUR UNHAPPY DIVISIONS . . . . .	85
HARVEST ON THE SOMME—AND ELSEWHERE . . . . .	91
ON DISCIPLINE . . . . .	98
ON COMPULSORY RATIONING, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL . . . . .	105
A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH . . . . .	III



# **VISIONS AND VIGNETTES OF WAR**



## ON GETTING A COMMISSION

*November, 1914.*

I AM to get my chance in this great war after all. I have just been to see the Chaplain-General. He is a wonderfully fine-looking old man. He had some very searching questions to ask, most of which could only be answered by writing a book.

“Why did I want a Commission?” I really didn’t know; it is hard to know the reasons of one’s likes and dislikes, one’s cravings and shrinkings, but thinking it over in the train afterwards I found them to be many and varied, some even shameful. The human being is a curious mixture of animal, human and divine. His impulses are partakers of his mixed origin.

Why, then, did I want to take part in the war? I found the following among the reasons :—

I don’t like being thought a shirker; I might even get a white feather on my

## 2 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

black coat. I don't like to think myself a shirker. I don't like being out of it in anything ; I am fond of excitement. It is a fine chance of studying human nature. I should like to know more of myself, how I should behave when I am " up against it." It seems dreadful to be living in ease, safety and comfort when others are suffering so much. I should like to try to ease some of the sufferers. I should like to try to cheer the men on in their struggle by some message from God, and so perhaps do some service for my Master.

I could not be certain which was the master motive. Self-knowledge is a science, in the pursuit of which the more you learn the more you doubt. The most dangerous liar is not the man who deceives other people but the man who deceives himself.

Another question he asked me was whether I had been successful in my work with men. How should I know ? What is success in the spiritual sphere ? Was Jesus Christ a success or a failure ? He told the story of a most successful farmer who had made a fortune ; but he had unmade himself, he had lost his soul. " As a

## ON GETTING A COMMISSION 3

man thinks so is he." My thoughts make me. "I think, therefore I am." This man was no longer man, he was barns, corn, comfort, ease. He had unmade himself. Had I been successful with men? What did he mean? Had I conducted huge Bible classes, had I presented large numbers of candidates for confirmation? These might be just the measure of my failure. Had I led men to a greater sense of God and love of their fellows? This cannot be computed. God knows—only God.

Another conundrum set me was—"What should I do if I came across a man who had only five minutes to live?" How should I know unless the Spirit gave me utterance? Quite undoubtedly the reason why professional comforters make such awful mistakes and so only irritate is that they start with some theory, some plan of campaign. Job's friends sat down near him in silence for three days, but even so the only effect of their efforts was to produce in the poor sufferer a condition of argumentative mental agony—an offence against God and man. They all had a theory, a cast-iron solution. They hurt. A dying man is in a peculiar condition.

#### 4 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

He may be so shocked by the wound, or full of morphia, that he can be conscious of nothing ; his mind may be far away among the angels and his eyes beholding the beatific vision—a state not uncommon just at the end—that to interrupt him with mere words is a kind of sacrilege.

No, every case—you must remember that a case is not really a case but a human being—differs so entirely from every other that unless you can be certain that the Spirit will give you utterance you must despair.

In this very materialistic age we have ceased to really believe in the Spirit. Even some leaders of the English Church pin their faith in the guidance of the Spirit for the first five centuries, as if He ceased to exist or to act after that. These days of machinery and mechanism have made them afraid of letting themselves go on the stream of life, they have become crustaceans, they have got into their shell of custom and tradition in their timidity : they feel safe because they are in their shell, but without breaking the shell they can never answer to the "*poussée de la vie*," without a break up of the customs

## ON GETTING A COMMISSION 5

and traditions and methods of the past, and a real trust in the guidance of the Divine Spirit, there can be no progress, no real life at all.

Well, ten minutes with the Chaplain-General have raised some thoughts and some questionings, but anyhow I am for it, I am going to have the chance of seeing something of life and death: perhaps this will raise more problems and perhaps, too, suggest some answers.

## THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT

*May, 1915.*

WHATEVER a man may forget in after-life, certain scenes of his first battle will for ever remain indelibly imprinted on his mind. There is something so shocking about it. It produces a state of complete mental paralysis.

The powers that be thought that I should not be much use at an advanced Dressing Station, and also seemed to have an altogether exaggerated view of the sanctity of the Padre's life, so I was ordered to the Field Ambulance at Vieille Chapelle.

It was very awe-inspiring passing along the road in the dark the night before the attack. Troops were quietly marching up, there was a feeling of great things in the air. We expected to be in Lille in a couple of days, the Huns in full retreat. I was wondering at what cost the victory would be won. It seemed wretched not to remain with the men one had learnt to know and love.

## THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT 7

So I thought as I crawled along on my motor-cycle, but my dreams were abruptly stopped by a *rencontre* with another motor-cyclist coming in the opposite direction—also without lights. . . . The ditch was luckily not a deep one, and fairly dry, and neither of us was any the worse. So I hastened back to bed to get a good sleep before the work began.

The men were to go “over the top” at dawn, and we expected the first casualties soon afterwards, so I went out to see “Granny” shoot, to pass away the time. She was a 15-inch naval gun. Each shell weighed 1500 lb., and in its flight—for one could see it quite easily—reminded one of a beautifully driven cricket ball. One imagined that the effect at the other end must be startling. There was a very nice little farm about 150 yards in front of the gun. By some miracle it had escaped all damage from the Huns as they passed through, and from us as we pushed them back. However, Granny was too much for it. The first blast rattled the tiles, the last shook down the ceilings. The owners were naturally aggrieved—*mais c'est la guerre!*

## 8 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

The hospital was the village school, just like a school at home with the play-ground in front. War is no play-ground. The cases began to roll up thick and fast from the A.D.S., and soon the rooms were full and the play-ground began to be covered with the stretchers, while the mob of walking cases loafed around. Such a sight it was—humanity hidden beneath mud, blood and bandages. But the Divine peeped out. It seems as if the best can never be truly revealed except by torture. The Master was never so Divine to our eyes as He was on the Cross.

My task was to go around among them to cheer them with God's peace, write their letters, give them soup, in fact do any service for them which was possible. I therefore had plenty of opportunity to see behind the scenes of life.

The language of the Army is not all found in the dictionary, but I never heard a man blaspheme. No one complained or bemoaned his fate. One officer whom I knew, quietly remarked, "My number's up, Padre, I have got it in the stomach." It was just accepted. Their unselfishness, too, was amazing : hungry and thirsty, men

## THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT 9

refused soup or drank but little till you told them that there was plenty for all ; shivering or wet, they said they were all right till you told them that there was no shortage of blankets ; they always seemed to think that their pal by their side was in more need than they of immediate attention by the doctor.

One young officer, pretty badly knocked about, called me to him and asked me to write a letter to his colonel. I wrote at his dictation : " I wish to recommend Pte. —, No. —, ' A ' Co., for bravery. When I was lying wounded he stretched himself over my body under heavy fire to protect me from the shrapnel." Nice of him, I thought, to remember just then. A fine act, too.

So the hours passed by. The tramp, tramp of the stretcher-bearers became a sort of nightmare. We tried to get everyone under cover, and just as we thought it would be done, tramp, tramp—in came some more. The scheme was that one set of cars brought the wounded from St. Vaast Post to Vieille Chapelle, another took them on after they had been dressed to the Casualty Clearing Station, but the

## 10 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

latter took much longer on their journey than the former, hence the congestion of wounded.

As the night wore on they began to die. It is evidently a wonderfully easy thing to do—just like going off to sleep. But it was fairly heart-rending, as some of them were such children and all of them so good. One boy aged seventeen had come out full of boyish enthusiasm and patriotism saying that his age was nineteen, and Festubert was his first battle. He had a bullet in the stomach. As the night wore on he got weaker, and as I came to moisten his lips, he said, “I don’t think I shall live very long now, do you, sir?” “No,” I said, “I think very soon all your pain will be over and you will be in the happy land of peace and sunshine.” He was quiet for a time and then he began fumbling in his pocket and out came a dirty envelope—a letter to his mother. “Shall I send her any message?” I asked him. “Tell my mother,” he said, “that anyhow her boy did not die a coward.”

It seems a wonderfully easy thing to die, but of course you do not really die. It ought not to be hard to pass into the

## THE BATTLE OF FESTUBERT 11

Father's House with its many mansions. Some too are so wonderfully comforted on their way by a vision of angels.

There was a Scottish lad in the Seaforths who was so badly smashed that knowing that he could not live we put him into a little bell-tent so that he would not be disturbed. I kept going to him off and on, and once I found him looking up and smiling with every sign of the deepest enjoyment. "Why is it you are so happy?" I said. Pointing with his finger all around, he said, "There are martyrs, martyrs everywhere." There is no death—only the body.

. . . . .

The dawn came with the passing of night. I had to search the dead bodies for their little possessions. The doctor and I were amazed to find that nearly every man had a Bible or a cross on him. "They do seem religious," he said, "these boys; I should never have thought they would have such things." Perhaps they carried them as a charm—a sort of magic, perhaps because they felt more than they knew that "such things" contained the secret of life and death and immortality, perhaps

## 12 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

because they had a deep love for them.  
None can say.

. . . . .

We hear on all sides that the battle has been a complete failure—on our part insufficiency of artillery—no troops can advance against modern machinery over the open.

. . . . .

The old 52nd Light Infantry are marching down the road. They went in full strength in front of Richebourg. They are marching out 150 strong. They gained their objective. They are undefeated. They hold their heads high. They are whistling their Regimental March. This is the spirit of the Old Country at its best—unquenchable. It is the spirit divine.

## A STRETCHER-BEARER AND A MORAL

BETHUNE,

*June, 1915.*

I FEEL to-night as if I had been looking into Hell—a sort of crushed feeling—of mental paralysis—as if I had seen an awful reality in its horror.

War is a great revealer of realities.

I was down in the trenches during the afternoon talking to the men, when one of them remarked, “ You remember, sir, that stretcher-bearer we were talking about the other day ? ” I remembered him well, for often had the men spoken to me of his courage in bringing in the wounded. It was his special pride, the doing of this work, to get out of the trench and fetch in some poor fellow who was lying out. He never seemed to care for the risks. “ Why should I be afraid ? ” he used to say. “ The Lord Almighty will never let me be hit doing work like this.”

“ What has he been doing now ? ” I

## 14 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

asked. "He's dead, sir, died last week in Bethune when we were out resting—died drunk I'm sorry to say, sir. It seems a pity, sir, doesn't it? And they say he had a girl at home. He tried to get home to put her straight. Seems sad, sir, doesn't it?"

War certainly is a revealer, and nothing has it displayed to this generation so clearly as the horror of sin. We had got very optimistic about it. "The healthy-minded man of to-day does not consider his sins," we said, "his task is to be up and doing." We had such a simple child-like faith in progress as a necessary law of life that we never seriously considered the question, what if he can't be up and doing?

"Sin is only the yelp of the beast," we said, "we must not forget man's animal ancestry." Quite so, but we must also remember that to know the history of a thing does not diminish its horror. What if the beast has not only yelped but also devoured the man? What if the man has become assimilated in the beast?

"Sin is just missing the mark," we said; "you are shooting at a target, aiming at an ideal; you cannot expect to hit each time." Quite so, but what if you not only

miss the mark but wound the marker? What if you not only miss the bull's-eye but break someone's heart?

"You must try again," we said; "a man learns by his failures." Yes, but what if in missing the mark he has lost his nerve and become more and more likely to fail? There is no danger so great as the loss of morale.

This the obstinate old Church has said all along. It has been hopelessly out of date in the face of modern optimism; it has officially clung to a belief in Hell in the face of the modern mind. Now everyone understands Hell and its cause, for war is a great revealer. War is Hell: selfishness is the cause.

Germany's ideal of Empire was world-power. For fifty years her policy was dictated by this motive. "Crush Austria, crush Denmark, crush France, the way will then be paved for the fall of Britain. In the struggle for existence might is right, a great war justifies any cause; be cruel, terrorize mankind, so will you get power, a place under the sun, markets for your merchants, riches for your people."

The tragedy of this war is that you can

see the finished product of the sinful mind. The process has been gradual, but the beast has not only yelped in its cruel, selfish lust, it has devoured, almost assimilated, the quiet home-loving Germany, the Germany of music and thought. No longer does she aim at the mark, the prize of her high calling, she has run amok and is shooting at the spectators.

The British nation has always been one which refused to think at all, refused to have any policy. It might almost be said that Germany worked by the way of reason, England by that of intuition. We have reluctantly built up an Empire without the smallest idea of what we were doing or what was the good of it, we have even tried to slough it off, but it has become one, as if it had to. Now we are beginning to rationalize it. Let us pray that we don't get German rationalism. It is insidious in its growth; it is none the less soul-destroying.

But no one nation in the West can really throw stones with a clear conscience at the German ideal. It is the Western ideal brought to its logical conclusion and revealed in its nakedness.

"It is impossible to be honest in business." This is said by quite decent people in justification of deceiving the public in the struggle for existence. What is it but the German dictum, "The end justifies the means"? "Get on or get out"—what is this but the German world-policy applied to the industrial world? We have shuddered at the German baby-killers in the world war, we have ourselves murdered them at the rate of 100,000 a year in the industrial war.

War is Hell—Selfishness is the cause.

But the Church is not really pessimistic : in her education of the child as revealed in the little-known catechism she reveals herself an optimist. "What are you?" she asks, and the child is told to answer not John the son of the old man with his bad habits, but John the son of God. He is a son of the Highest, he is heir of the best, the life that animates his body is the life of the Ideal. Does he believe it? Yes, he believes in his Father God, his Redeemer God, and his Guiding God. Well, then, he has got duties. Oh! if only all heirs of great possessions were so well taught their duties as the Christian to his Father God

c

## 18 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

and his fellow-men ! Not a word is breathed to him about sin or his animal ancestry. "Look up, live up to the best traditions of your Family," we tell him. It is only when he gets older that he is to be taught about sin and forgiveness when he learns about the Sacraments. What a pity Mr. Holmes never learnt the catechism ! What a pity a great many Puritanically-minded Christian teachers did not imbibe its spirit—the Divine optimism of the Church !

But my mind to-night strays back to that magnificent stretcher-bearer—dead drunk, his girl heart-broken and ashamed, with nothing to comfort her.

How shocking a thing has war, the great revealer, shown sin to be !

## ON THE CLOTH HALL AT YPRES AND OTHER RUINS

YPRES,

*March, 1916.*

THERE is a feeling of irreparable disaster about it. There is nothing to be done. It is ruined beyond repair. It is as if someone had thrown vitriol in the face of a beautiful woman. For centuries it has stood there, representing the soul of a merchant people, proud of their weaving and their city, a home of liberty. They had built it under the shadow of their church, which was destined to become when allied with politics the destroyer of their liberty. But that is past history. The present fact is the vision of the catastrophe, a priceless treasure broken in pieces. It is beyond repair.

A similar feeling has possessed the minds of most of the great spiritual men and women all down the ages when they thought of sin. How can a man get straight when once he has got off the highway? How can he be forgiven? Nature

herself seems so hard. A man perhaps from ignorance commits a crime against her, and all through his life he has to bear the marks of her resentment in an enfeebled body. Is God like that ?

Yet everyone craves for the wiping out of the past. How can sin be forgiven ? Can the broken Image of God be mended ?

Clearly there are two problems involved in this : the recovery, first, of the individual and, secondly, of a lost relationship.

The solution of the first is attempted by what one may call Buddhism. To the Buddhist all created things are illusion (*Maya*). Sin consists in the desire for these things, salvation in escape from desire. How, then, is a man to escape ? It cannot be done in a short three-score years and ten. After the death of the body the self is emancipated in the spirit world, cleansed, and taught, and when this process is complete it is reincarnated in a new body with its new experience. Its happiness or otherwise in its new life will be its "Karma," the fate which it has earned in the previous existence. Ultimately when desire ceases the soul will return to the Infinite, it will abide in the Nirvana.

Here we have an attempt in one system to show the justice of the world and the way of salvation. A man gets whatever he deserves. Salvation comes through illumination.

The Christian attempts to deal with both problems together. To him the Universe is personal, sin is an act of rebellion against God. It is not as with the Jew so much an insult to the Great King, it is rather a blow at the heart of a Father.

It is this Christian conception of the world that makes the solution so logically difficult.

If I had a little daughter, the apple of my eye, and daily watched her growth in beauty and goodness—my joy and my pride : if one day some blackguard ruined her life and brought her down in sorrow and shame to the grave, could I ever forgive him ? I could, if I were bad, if I had no love ; but the greater my love, the deeper my goodness, the more mad and bitter I should feel, the more forgiveness would be a moral miracle.

This is what the Cross means, a moral miracle that only God can perform.

In the teaching of Christ there is no

## 22 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

logic, no legalism, no requirements of abstract justice, simply love. A perfect father will always be looking and longing for the return home of the son, he will forgive until seventy times seven. The supplies of his love are inexhaustible. What a mystery! O the depth of the wisdom of the knowledge of God! What words can one find with which to express the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? The language of logic cannot approach it: the truth can only glimmer through metaphor.

"What does it mean to you?" one would ask of his friend. "I feel," he would say, "like a slave set free. For years I have been struggling in bondage, longing for liberty from the slavery of habit, and in despair as I felt the fetters binding me more securely; I could not save enough to pay for my release and I came to Jesus. In a moment I knew that I was free, the ransom was paid."

"What does it mean to you?" he would ask of another. "I felt," he would reply, "like a criminal under the sentence of death—I knew that I deserved it but that did not make me any happier. The judge had

pronounced his verdict—I could do nothing. Then Jesus came. In a moment I felt the dread sentence removed—I was pardoned. He was the mediator.”

Another would reply—“I was the prisoner standing in the dock, the evidence was heaped up against me—I was speechless under the eye of the judge. Then Jesus stood by my side, He became my advocate, the prisoners’ friend, He had something to say.”

Oh ! the wonderful variety of the Christian experience. It was life itself. It was life expressed in metaphor.

Then came the schoolmen, the logicians, and murdered it. They wanted to know to whom the ransom was paid, what right the creditor had to demand it ; they imagined a debt to abstract Justice accumulating ever greater and greater from the days of Adam and laid to the charge of each child of Adam. How could the just judge forgive that ?

Then the lovers of magic took over the corpse. They taught that owing to the voluntary suffering of punishment by a perfectly just individual who summed up in himself all mankind, the judge was

pacified, he changed his mind towards us, he was satisfied. Thus in the early days men postponed baptism till they were dying, in order that they might not sin after the washing away had been done for them, and many to-day are deeply anxious for sacramental absolution at the hour of death for the same cause.

Some even believe that unbaptized people and unbelievers are in danger of damnation—complete exclusion from The Presence. This perversion of the teaching of the Master was caused by using spiritual metaphors as if they were scientific statements.

Another disaster was due to a heathenish misunderstanding of the whole idea of the Jewish sacrifice.

The Jew had a wonderful idea that nothing except the full offering of a man at his best was of any avail. This he tried to symbolize in the sin offering. The ritual was as follows. The sinner brought his victim to the sanctuary door, where he was received by the priest. Here he confessed his sin, laying his hand on the head of the animal, the idea being that so the victim became the sinner himself. He then

cut its throat and collected the blood in a basin, which the priest offered on the altar. The whole point was that to the Jew the blood offered was the life, and the life not of the lamb but of the offerer, and it was not the death or pain of the victim but the life of the sinner offered to God in symbol which was acceptable to God. It was not the pain or the death of the Master which was acceptable to God, but the perfect life given up to His service.

The materialism of logicians accustomed to the injustice of medieval monarchs took this beautiful idea, and through misunderstanding of the metaphors, imagined that our pardon was bought by the agony of Jesus, by whom only the Judge could be appeased.

Anything further from the mind of Christ one cannot imagine. You cannot tell what love can do, you only know that it can work a moral miracle. You cannot argue about it, you cannot prove it ; it is like the ether in the material world ; it is above all, through all, and in all.

The verdict of Christian experience is that the crooked can be made straight even in this life : its belief is that the Infinite

## 26 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

Being, in whom all things consist, is also the Father of us all, just like Jesus of the Gospels, and that even when the prodigal is away among the swine, He is for ever whispering in his ear, "Come home": that He is with him every step of the way, and that when he comes the victim to be slaughtered is no propitiation but the emblem, the sign of the joy in the Home, the forgiveness of Jesus.

This, then, is the Christian solution: the problem that it does not attempt to solve is whether the sinner will ever forgive himself.

The prodigal son must have felt most uncomfortable in his home for many months after his return, and the kindness of his Father must have but increased his shame. But suppose he had taken his sister away and left her among the harlots, and she had not come back, what then? If away in that far country there were some poor family ruined by him, some boy among the swine, some child diseased. Will he ever forgive himself? His only solace will be, not the best robe and the ring, but work for his Father.

In the life beyond this, when our eyes

are opened, I cannot but think that our first feeling will be one of hopeless, shrinking, self-annihilating horror, when we see the ravages of our neglect. Gradually, under the gentle healing of the Divine Physician, we may rise up with an unquenchable thirst to repair the damage : we may be honoured with His trust again, so that toiling unceasingly with eternal hope shining ever more and more unto the perfect day we may enter into a peace and joy that passes understanding.

## FEAR

IF there is any one virtue which holds the admiration of men and women universally it is courage. I suppose that the reason is that everyone has a knowledge that he is himself a coward at heart, and dreads that some day his will-power may fail and he will show it—perhaps he remembers some ugly incident with shame. Some kinds of fear are quite irrational and almost seem to be a throw-back to a former age. Some women are terrified of mice and not of rats. Some men shudder at a cat, some cannot walk across a bridge or along the edge of a precipice, some have a dread of water, some cannot face ridicule, some criticism, some unpopularity. Some are terrified of shells and don't mind bullets, some are careless under shell-fire but duck every time a bullet "zips" by. Some cannot stand either. This is why the Victoria Cross is valued more highly than any decoration that an Englishman can earn. But without doubt there are daily deeds

of magnificent bravery done—but never recognized—by men at whose hearts terror has clutched, but whose steadfast will holds them firm and keeps them quiet and cheery when they feel every instinct urging them to run away. This war has made one very charitable in one's judgments. One never now calls a man a coward, one says, "Poor So-and-so has got the wind up badly."

The delicate organization of man's nervous system was never intended for the strain which it has to bear. Consider the shells ; there is not only the awful crash of the explosion, the horrible violence of the thing, there are the sights, the pieces of your friend picked up here and there for burial, the smell of the trenches, and last, but not least, the anticipation. They have located your position, you can hear the bigger shells coming, coming, coming, the gentle purring crescendoing to a frightful scream—some you can hear for five or ten seconds, you hold your breath as you wonder if it is coming near you. There is also the minenwerfer, the huge trench mortar, which comes swerving at you ; there is the sniper ever on the look out ;

## 30 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

night after night there may be a raid in the darkness, or gas may come your way and wipe out half your company before the gas helmets can be put on ; you may be living over a mine and at any moment be put up "among the little birds." No ! You daren't even sneer in your heart at a man whose nerve gradually wears away, or at one in whose brain something has suddenly snapped, making him totally incapable of any self-control. You know that it might happen to you. You dread it in yourself. Fear makes men cruel—this terror makes you kind.

Never shall I forget the first day I got a real shelling.

It was a beautiful April day and everything seemed peaceful. I was sitting talking with some of the officers when it began. The Huns had got set on the part of the line where I was, and not only were firing directly at the trench, but had a gun right away on the left and were enfilading us. They made excellent practice and went on for perhaps three-quarters of an hour. I was able to notice the behaviour of those near me. One man was trembling all over, another almost crying, the teeth of another

were chattering, another cursed the Boches, some did not seem to care. I myself was terrified, but they told me afterwards that I showed no sign of it. I believe it was Leibnitz who held that every cell of the body has a conscious life of its own, with its own wishes, desires, pains and joys. That day I felt that the theory must be true, that every cell in my body was a little person, and that each little person was trying to get down to the ground. It made my body ache, and the sensation did not wear off for several hours. "Fear hath torment." One never realized before how profoundly true that old saying was.

In view of this ever-surrounding fear of the Boche, or fear of death, or fear of the unknown, or fear of fear, which almost everyone has from time to time, it is natural that certain methods should be consciously or unconsciously adopted to counteract it. Those noticeable in war are as old as the hills.

The first is that of calling a terrible thing by a pleasant or comic name. The ancient Greeks, terrified of the storms in the Black Sea, called it "The Euxine," or the "Friendly One." The early mariners

## 32 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

round the Horn called that turbulent ocean "The Pacific."

Our soldiers call the Prussian "Fritz," and wonder how many waiters there are opposite them ; the small shell is a "pip-squeak" or "whiz-bang," the heavy a "coal-box" or "Jack Johnson" ; if a man is killed he "gets it in the neck," "goes West," or is "nah pooed" (derived from the French *il n'y a plus*). Merriment is one of the gifts of the gods. St. Paul puts it as a virtue between love and peace.

Secondly comes the method of making yourself appear quite unconcerned. This method of play-acting is very sound psychology. You make your body, your face or your eye act the virtue or sensation you wish to acquire. Matter acts on spirit as well as spirit on matter.

I remember one afternoon very well in the reserve trenches in front of Cambrin. The Huns put up a mine, and then started rapid fire. The men near me were standing on the fire-step and getting very excited, when the Company Commander came out of his dug-out in his shirt-sleeves and said in a drawly voice, "Well, well, someone's got the wind up this afternoon." The

effect was quite electrical ; everyone became perfectly calm and collected. The callous indifference of the public-school manner has its values in war.

Thirdly comes philosophy. The philosophy of the trenches is fatalism. " What is to be will be : if a shell or a bullet comes your way with your name on it, it's yours, so it's no use dodging. It is all a matter of fate, blind irrational fate, undirected chance." The ways of shells and bullets are so queer and they perform such miracles in the pursuit of some people, that the *prima facie* answer to the question why " one is taken and the other left " seems to be found either in the awful inevitableness of fate or the unreasoning stupidity of luck. In any case it is no good worrying.

Fourthly I must mention alcohol. What a wonderful stuff it is ! You are shivering with cold, a tot of rum makes you glow with warmth. You are depressed, it makes you laugh ; tired, it renews your strength ; frightened, it fills you with courage. But dramming is the beginning of the end. It is only a question of time and then with body and will enfeebled the crash comes.

Merriment is the gift of the gods, but

D

## 34 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

what is to happen when the thing passes a joke and you can laugh no more? Studied indifference of manner is invaluable, but what if you can control your body no more? Fatalism is a relief for a time, but what if the blind hopelessness of it crushes your spirit? Wine "maketh glad the heart of man," but what if the inevitable reaction—increased fatigue, depression and nervousness—demands ever-increasing stimulant?

"And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee."

The best and bravest men and women all down the ages have been those whose lives were founded on a great faith and whose actions were inspired by a deep religious enthusiasm. The one remedy for fear is the possession of a deep soul-possessing divine belief.

## CHRISTIANITY THE RELIGION OF COWARDS?

ONE of the most disquieting of the popular views of Christianity to-day is that it is the religion of fear.

The reason of this is not far to seek. We have allowed religion to become a sort of emergency affair—a last resort. A man who has not prayed for years kneels sobbing by the bedside of his child who is sick; a drunken blasphemous soldier, a scoffer at religion, starts praying under heavy shell fire, and when the danger is past, he returns to his old ways. A mission preacher draws awful pictures of Hell, and urges his audience to repentance in order that they may escape. This sort of atmosphere surrounding popular religion disgusts the real man. "I call it cowardice," he says. He is right. But what he does not realize is that what he hates is what Christ would hate, what he despises is what Christ would despise. This emergency religion, which treats God as a sort of extra

## 36 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

to be brought to bear when all else has failed, is simply magic, simply heathenism, a reversion to the dark ages.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible the commands, "Fear not," "Be not afraid," "Be of good cheer," "Be strong," are given again and again, and the prophet cringing on the ground is told to stand upon his feet like a man, before God will speak to him. When we come to the Man who was the fulfilment of the old Jewish scriptures, the Founder of Christianity, we have a picture of complete moral and physical courage. The sense of duty, the pursuit of His Ideal without wavering, dominated His life. Neither ridicule nor fear of death could move Him; in times of danger the most difficult dilemmas were faced with quiet calm, questions which were designed to destroy him were answered with child-like directness, and the pains of death borne unflinchingly on the Cross. He would not even allow himself to be drugged. He was Courage.

So He taught His disciples—"Why are you so fearful?"—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body." And this, not because they could appeal to Him in an emergency

## RELIGION OF COWARDS ? 37

to save them, but because God was all and in all, He was a Father to them, He cared and knew, and therefore there was nothing to be afraid of except dirtiness of soul.

St. Paul, imbued with this spirit, writing to cheer his fellow-Christians in Rome, told them that he was confident that even death could not separate them from the Love of God which was in Christ Jesus.

The things which have driven the most adventurous spirits away from visible Christianity have been magical prayers for the avoidance of trouble. But this is not Christianity. The religion of Christ means not only the worship of the Absolute Infinite, it means also the presence of a Friend always at hand. Prayer, then, is not cadging but companionship. The real value of a friend is not that he stands you a good dinner when you are broke, but that he has a fine character which by contact with him you absorb.

Communion with God does not save us trouble, does not give us wealth, does not make us lazy, does not ward off danger ; it does give us His Life, His Character, to make us strong, full of energy and courage to face all material loss when it comes.

## 38 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

Now the building of Character is an art, it needs practice, and the formation of friendship takes time. How is this to be managed by men and women living in a busy world? How is the soldier to do it when he is never alone and hardly ever quiet? How are they to meditate, to give their minds to the Divine Friend and His things? When they are tired they cannot meditate, sleep overcomes them; when worried, anxious, afraid or sad these things so possess their minds, the troubles to be cured so often drag down the soul that they exclude the only Cure.

. . . . .

One day I was visiting round the gun positions of a battery, when, looking into a dug-out, I saw a lad, white-faced and shivering all over. I thought that he must be ill, but on my asking him what was the matter he confessed that he was terrified. There was no danger at the moment, but the day before a shell had fallen among some men of the battery and knocked out three of them. His nerve had gone. He seemed quite astonished when I asked him if he believed in God, for this did not seem to him to have any connexion with his state

of mind, but he told me that he was a communicant and in a church choir at home. "Well," I said, "if you believe all that, you have no right to be afraid." I then told him what to do, and a day or two afterwards found him proud and delighted. A shell, he told me, had burst in his billet the night before and he was as steady as a rock.

What I told him was as old as the hills: it is found in the Praying Wheel of Thibet, in the Rosary of Christianity; "new" thought in America has discovered it quite lately, and science calls it auto-suggestion.

The stupid thing is that the Thibetan with his Wheel, and the Roman Catholic in the common use of his Rosary, think that God is pleased by the number of times the sacred words are said—a sort of magic; the value, however, is not to be found in what the repetition will do for God, *but in what the companionship of a great thought will do for you.*

Think if you are worried what it would be to know that "your Heavenly Father knoweth": if you are frightened, to saturate your mind with the thought, "There shall no evil happen unto thee,"

## 40 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

or "There is no death." So you take some quite short, it need not be a complete sentence, full of a great idea, to combat the disease in your mind. If you try to meditate upon it your mind wanders. You therefore set yourself a task; to repeat it two, three hundred times. The counting is quite easy either with beads or on your fingers, saying the sentence five times for each finger. After a little practice it can be done as you walk along the road or as you lie in bed. It gives comfort and ease to the body, it releases the strain when the nerves are at full stretch, it drives away fear, it conquers sin, it leads to God.

Such is the value of the Companionship of a great thought. The Christian Life is the companionship of the Great Thinker. If only by the companionship with the Master we could absorb His courage, we should root away the reproach of cowardice which is cast at us.

But we must give up cadging, for cadging and cowardice are close allies, cadging and comradeship deadly foes.

## IS GOD ALMIGHTY?

ALMOST every soldier that I have ever met believes in God. Perhaps grudgingly he calls Him "The Supreme Being," but I often hear him say, "If He were almighty He *could* stop this war; if He were good He would want to; why does He allow it?" It pains his kindly simple heart to think of an Almighty Good Person witnessing this horror and yet not using His Power to stop it, for "does not Almighty mean that He can do everything?" What a dilemma!

Now most intellectual impasses are due to ambiguous language. Many problems are solved by defining the meaning of the terms employed. Goodness, what does that mean? Obviously not careless kindness. He is a bad father who spoils his children; a good doctor often has to inflict pain. Goodness must mean that which is designed to produce the highest good. Almighty—plainly this cannot mean that God can do everything; He cannot make two and two make five, He cannot do any-

## 42 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

thing evil, He cannot do anything unreasonable, "He cannot deny Himself." *He cannot deny Himself.* This, perhaps, is a clue. I think of the universe as revealing the Mind of God to us. I find it acting in a rational way, that is, that certain causes under similar circumstances always produce certain effects ; so that I can prophesy what the universe will do, when the seasons will vary, when a comet will appear, when the rainy season will commence. I have the mind of God, I am made in His Image. "He hath given them a Law which shall not be broken." Whether the universe acts so from a power outside it like a machine, or from a power within like my body, I shall never know. But it makes no difference. God cannot deal with these laws of causation in an arbitrary manner, not because he has not the physical power, but because these laws or methods of operation represent His Mind. He cannot deny Himself. In this lies the difference between ancient and modern thinkers. In older days they thought that the holding up of the sun and the moon, the banking of a river or sea, as an exhibition of Almightyness added to the Glory of God.

I to-day am disinclined to believe in these miracles, not because I do not believe in God Almighty, but because I cannot believe in a God who has recourse to makeshifts, who tries first one thing and then another, or favours some people at the expense of others. The rain drops, the sun shines on the evil and the good ; the innocent child is burnt by the fire. The laws of nature, the way, that is, by which God works, are perhaps the only possible ways for Him, because there is only one best way. He cannot think anything but what is best. Nothing in the material world is impossible to God because of the difficulty or bigness of the task ; many things are impossible to Him because He cannot deny Himself. His limitation is a moral self-limitation. His impotence is a moral impotence.

There are not only material laws by which I can prophesy material events and make plans for the future, there are also moral laws, by knowledge of which I can prophesy that a certain condition of mind will inevitably produce a certain effect. It is this truth that the Old Testament writers were groping for. To them God was Outside, the Lawgiver and the Judge.

## 44 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

Those who hate His Laws must be wiped out ; victory did not lie with " big battalions," but with those who kept the Divine Law. To-day the scientific historian, writing of the same events, would probably say, " The story of the Jewish people is an illustration of what seems to be a natural law, that the nation which gives way to luxury, immorality, drunkenness and love of pleasure and ease, will have small chance of survival in the struggle for existence ; that which sacrifices itself in the pursuit of a great ideal is indestructible."

In view of such a thought consider the state of the world before the war. No one can deny that it was a world of selfishness. Never before had the rich been so rich and at the same time so many on the borderland of starvation. The nations were at daggers drawn, each trying to cut out the others in the great trade war, and to impede their development. It is a moral law that Selfishness makes Hell, and national selfishness makes war. It is often said that this war would have been avoided had England heaped up more armaments. But the moral law cannot so be escaped. The only result would have been that Germany

would not have gambled in England's non-intervention. The Moral Law demanded war. It was only a question of time. Germany could hardly have chosen a time more helpful to us.

God cannot deny Himself. The world will not have peace till the nations have been converted.

In the international sphere the problems which arise must be treated in the spirit of co-operation rather than in that of competition. If, for instance, within the Empire a system of tariffs is organized for the development of natural resources and industries, or for the protection of labour against unfair competition, well and good, but if it is designed to further cripple Germany it will be a breach of the moral law. A bitter trade war will be but a prelude to another world-devastating campaign, for Selfishness makes Hell.

If we seriously wish this war to end war, we must be converted, we must have a change of heart, we must abandon our exclusive nationalism, we must obey the moral law of sacrifice, for national selfishness leads to war as certainly as by the law of gravitation the stone falls to the ground.

## 46 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

The same principle applies to the industrial world. People sometimes speak as if the relations of employers and employed were bound to be improved because of the dangers and hardships shared in the trenches. This is a reasonable expectation. But if after the war the employers are still unconverted and try to cut wages, and the men, in a similar frame of mind, to reduce output, the moral law will demand its penalty, "for whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken to pieces, but upon whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder."

But herein is hope. In the moral sphere the disasters which befall the law-breaker contain the gift of healing for those who can receive it.

The agony of war has called out all the world over a new spirit, the spirit of service. Millions of men and women who three years ago thought of little except of themselves and what they would get, now only think of what they can give; children are drinking in the spirit of sacrifice with their mother's milk. The Jesuit's saying is: "Give me the child for three years and it is always mine." The children of England have been given to the spirit of sacrifice

and service for over three years. We may well pray to God for them, " May they be Thine for ever."

Then our brothers will not have died in vain.

## THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN

YPRES,

*April*, 1916.

I HAVE found a delightful garden. As you go out of the Menin Gate on the way to Potigze, it is on the left about 200 yards up the road. From it you get the most beautiful view of Ypres. Around me as I sit the flowers are coming out, the primula, the tulip, and the lily of the valley. Further is the great wall built by the Archbishop in the days of the fierce rivalry between his city and Ghent, and beyond again that living spiritual masterpiece, wonderful even in its ruin, the cathedral and the Cloth Hall. As I sit and think the shadows lengthen and the Hun begins his evening hate with quite peculiar intensity, and the shells whistle over and fall with a crash in someone's house. Our guns begin barking in reply. It becomes a sort of pandemonium—that means all devils. But not all, for beauty is not to be denied. Out of some bush near by a nightingale begins to

sing. It was like the still small voice Elijah heard when the thunder and lightning had passed by. It seemed to say, "You can loose Hell, but you cannot kill beauty."

There were some very curious thinkers of last century—some even survive to this day—who called themselves Utilitarians. They thought that nothing existed in the world except what was useful. "The whole world is a great battlefield," they said, "in which only the fittest survive. It is a law of nature that like breeds like, but always with slight variations. Those variations which are of advantage in the struggle for existence are handed on to the next generation, and those which have them not go under. Thus gradually nature is perfected and the amazing varieties of life come to be. This solves the apparent mystery of the peacock's tail feather and the song of the bird. It is a question of value or utility in attracting the female." Certainly, I grant it, but the problem left quite unsolved is the origin of the love of Beauty. It has a thousand disadvantages on the world-battlefield—as if a guardsman were to fight in the Salient in his red and

gold. The love of beauty and love of goodness are twin mysteries, I feel them to be a gift from Perfect Beauty, Perfect Goodness, the Lover of all—God.

But the struggle for existence is still there, and struggle means pain. Moreover, the capacity to suffer is the crown of thorns given as a mark of honour in increasing intensity as things possessing life ascend the ladder of evolution. We have no evidence that flowers suffer pain, although we know of the sensitive plant. The crustaceans, the snails, the crabs seem almost insensible even to loss of limbs. Savage men can bear, without any apparent effort, operations which no civilized human being could endure. But there are worse pains than those of the body—those of the mind. The sense of sin will so play on the mind that even a murderer will sometimes willingly go to his death rather than continue in such torment. There is also the sense of God-forsakenness which rends the soul and drew from the Saviour of the world so terrible a cry.

Pain, then, is a mark of our high calling. A man may be so degraded that he suffers no pain at sin, he may have so forsaken

God that he doesn't feel forsaken. His failure to suffer is a mark of his baseness.

If this is so, then God must be not only Perfect Goodness and Perfect Beauty, He must be Perfect Suffering. This is certainly what the Cross means to the Christian ; not indeed that God came to this earth and suffered and then returned to Heaven, just as a Member of Parliament or Labour Leader comes to the Front and spends an afternoon in the trenches, and then goes home again to tell people what it is like, but that He came to reveal an Eternal Fact, that from the foundation of the world God is Perfect Suffering.

So He came into Time, into this world, to throw Himself on our mercy, to show us that He needed our help. This is our glory, that we are His sons. When we fail Him the Perfect Sufferer suffers, when we help Him there is "joy in heaven." So He loves His children just as a perfect father or mother. When we harm them, lead them from Him, or cause them pain, the Perfect Sufferer suffers because "for as much as we do it to one of the least of these His little ones we do it unto Him."

So the Cross has its place in the centre

of the Christian faith—not the common bloody Cross, but the Cross glorified as Jesus glorified it. Every Christian in so far as he is a follower of the Master must also have it central in his life.

Therefore in the midst of our pain and suffering we may be comforted by the thought that this and this only makes us members of Christ, sharers in His life, that this is a mark of our high calling. We may even thank God that we are not too degraded to feel, that we are counted worthy to suffer.

But the greatest comfort of all is to know that we are not just steps in the evolutionary ladder, mere “output ” from the mechanism of the universe, but living souls for whom our Father cares.

. . . . .

But someone may say, “ If all this is true God must be a very sad person, and Heaven a most miserable place.”

I have in my mind the picture of a woman who has suffered blow upon blow from the sorrows of life. As if this were not sufficient, men and women of all kinds go to her and pour out their sorrows and their sins,

## THOUGHTS IN A GARDEN 53

She bears their griefs and carries their sorrows. She never gives one the impression of sadness, neither is she always cheerful or optimistic. But there radiates from her a sense of Power and Peace.

Perhaps Heaven is like that, full of the Peace of God which passeth all understanding.

## CONCERNING CHARMS

YPRES,

*March, 1916.*

I HAD not, so far as I can recollect, spoken to him of religion before, indeed as C.O. of a battery he had seemed singularly reluctant in helping me to arrange any services for his men ; but one evening as we sat and talked he suddenly drew out from under his shirt a small silver medal hung on a piece of ribbon and showed it to me. It was stamped with the image of the Blessed Virgin.

“ I am not a Catholic,” he said, “ but I believe that as long as I wear this I shall be quite safe.” “ Well,” I said, “ I am glad you have found something in this unhealthy spot to keep your nerve firm and your mind at ease.”

And presently we talked of something else.

But as I walked home the medal came back into my mind, and my judgment was that it was an extraordinary bit of super-

stitution for an educated man, and that the little image was extremely unlikely to direct the course of a 5·9 shell. But presently I saw that it raised a far larger problem. The words of the Master came back into my mind—"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name ye shall receive ; whatsoever ye shall ask in faith believing ye shall receive." Here was a man praying for safety—it was the great unuttered wish of his heart ; he was full of faith. The mere fact that his faith was connected with a piece of stamped silver did not really alter the fact that he was praying in faith. Of course he did not believe that the medal would alter the course of a 5·9, but the feel of it against his chest made him realize the presence of the higher powers. He believed that his prayer was answered. The problem of the charm was really the problem of prayer in disguise.

Is it right or useful, or in the highest sense Christian, to pray for such a thing as personal safety ? What would Christ Himself do or teach ? The answer seems quite plain. Certainly He never taught His disciples in any way to expect miraculous deliverances from danger. We might have

## 56 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

expected to find that some such promises had crept in as a result of some of the experiences of St. Paul and the other apostles on their journeys. But, no ! Dead straight out He tells them what to expect—"Ye shall be betrayed by parents and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." For His name's sake and because of Him they were to expect pain : unless they suffered by bearing the Cross they could not be His Disciples. The following of Him was not to lead to personal safety. Indeed as He taught them to pray He put last the petitions, "lead us not into trial but deliver us from evil," as if the least important things to be prayed for were escape and avoidance of trouble.

But in the agony of the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane we get the revelation of the character of the Master Himself in face of death. We can understand a man's principles far better from what he does than from what he says.

Prayer was to Him, as it should be to us, a life. It was a life in a home. He spoke to His Father, it was a perfectly natural thing for a son to do, and doing so

to say exactly what was in his mind. His prevision of the horror of it all staggered Him. The abuse, the calumny, the disgrace, His mother, the insults, the scourging, the hanging naked on the cross in the sight of man hour after hour, the pain, the cold, blood-stained corpse—we can imagine how such visions surged through His mind. "O My Father," He cries, "if it be possible let this cup pass away from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." This was the mainspring of His life—not personal safety, but the Will of God. "I must be about my Father's business," said the Boy. "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me," said the Man. I shall starve if I do not do it, "for My meat is" to do that will. And so over and over again as He kneels in the Garden He says the same words, "Not My will, but Thine be done." When the time comes He is quite calm and filled with so awe-inspiring a Kingliness that His foes can scarcely face Him. The awful ordeal, the shame, and the pain are faced with a courage and a beauty unsurpassed.

No! true Christianity does not promise

## 58 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

any back-door escape from danger. It does make a man of you. "As many as received Him to them gave He power to become like Him, sons of God." Power, courage, manliness to face whatever may come—these are the gifts of Christ, gifts that a brave man may covet—the fruits of running away, never.

St. Paul was full of the Master's spirit when he wrote to Timothy, "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Here is real Christianity. The agony of crucifixion has no terrors for this man. He does not cringe and beg for escape. "I am ready," he says. This is true manliness. This is the real, Christian spirit.

. . . . .

But is it of any use to pray for safety? Our Lord certainly says that it is in His case. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of Angels." He might have prayed, He might have escaped, He might have hidden away, He might have enjoyed long life in

some quiet village—unknown ; but He would never have been the Divine Saviour. The beggar cringing beside you gets his penny because he is a beggar and begs ; but his begging not only reveals an inferior spirit, it produces an inferior spirit. A man may be a successful beggar with God, but he will not be a son : he may by begging for safety save his skin and so lose his self, he may gain success and lose his soul.

As long as breath is in the body there will be human shrinking from danger, human craving for the material. The ideal of prayer is to transform these, to make them Divine.

## THE ANGELS OF MONS AND OTHER MYTHS

So there were no angels at Mons after all ! It seems almost incredible. There were so many lines of evidence, they seemed to combine into a veritable chain, unbreakable, but there were no angels at Mons. It was a Myth.

Neither were there any Russians in England. So many people had seen these hardy men of Eastern Europe passing through our land on their way to the war. I myself know a first-hand witness. There was evidence from the Navy, some one had a friend in the know ; from the Army, a staff officer in the War Office had revealed the secret in the strictest confidence. But no Russian troops landed in England. It was a Myth.

Was Jesus also a Myth ?

There are quite a large number of scholars to-day who take this line about the life of the Divine Master, and the odd thing is that they are for the most part

not the opponents of Christianity like Renan or Haeckel, but men of high spiritual life who think that so they are doing a great service to religion. They tell us that the story of Jesus of the Gospels was either altogether or in the main mythical; they sweep the earthly Jesus away in order that the Spiritual Christ may be all in all.

This "Mythical" school may be divided into three classes.

First, there are those who think that Paul, not Jesus, was the founder of Christianity. He was brought up, they say, a Pharisee in a Greek centre and had long believed in a celestial Being, the Ideal Man. Obtaining a post under the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, he was sent out to exterminate a new sect of men who all but worshipped a fanatic who had been executed but who was believed by some to be alive from the grave. While engaged in this task he had his vision of the bright celestial figure of his dreams on the Damascus road, and consequently put a hyphen between Jesus the man of Nazareth and Christ. In his preaching, however, he does not know or care at all about Jesus,

## 62 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

but only for the indwelling Christ. He deified the fanatical Carpenter of Nazareth.

Next there are the upholders of the idea that Jesus of the Gospels never existed at all. These are out-and-out materialists. They have found the Mythologies of Mithra or Babylon, which contain many stories and ideas similar to those of the Gospels. Christianity, they say, was in its origin only one of many mystery religions existing in those days. There never was a Jesus of Nazareth. He is a Myth.

Lastly come the Eschatologists. These are the most popular to-day. They hold that Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher of extraordinary power who believed that the last days (*eschata*, Greek) were coming, the days of the Lord ; that he was the Messiah, the Christ (or if he did not, he certainly allowed his followers to think it), and that he would after his death come again in the clouds of heaven to judge the wicked, reward the righteous, and to usher in the new age—the rule of God. In this he was altogether misguided, and suffered for his folly. His body decayed by the ordinary processes in a Syrian grave. But these teachers are Christians. They worship the

“Logos,” how they get there I never can imagine—the ideal man, the God-man. One can only think that they have got their reason and their faith in two water-tight compartments. On the one hand their honesty seems to tell them that the residuum of the Gospel-Jesus, after that criticism has done its work, is the deluded fanatic ; on the other hand their faith tells them that the ideal picture therein displayed is The Person who has appeared to them and is King in their hearts.

The mythical conclusions do not seem to account for the facts ; it is like laying the foundation of your house on a cloud.

Now if you take the bare writings of the New Testament just as they are it is fairly easy to make out a case for each of the above classes of the “Mythical” school. But you cannot take them alone, apart from the Society which produced them.

There is a story in point from the great French hospital for neurasthenics at La Salpêtrière. Two doctors were discussing Joan of Arc and her powers. As they entered the hospital one remarked, “I can show you plenty like her here.” “Yes,” said the other, “but none of them have

## 64 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

saved France." You cannot explain everything by saying the magic word "Hysteria."

There have also been plenty of deluded fanatics who have died for their ideals, but only one Christ.

I cannot bring myself to believe that the four Gospels as a literary product are mere fiction.

I cannot believe that Paul, "the founder of Christianity," would have bothered to entangle his teaching with the encumbrance of an earthly fanatic who was murdered.

I cannot believe that that "poor misguided victim" could ever have become the ideal for the best of mankind, the Personal Friend of millions of men and women all down the ages. My reason demands some better theory to account for all the facts.

I picture it all to myself somehow like this.

Into a world of singular political, social and religious unrest there came a Man. He was of lowly birth and of no education, but He walked with God. The flowers, the birds, the children spoke to Him of His Father and the Angels; the seller of sparrows throwing in the extra one for two

farthings reminded Him of His Father's care for all ; the sower in the field, the merchant in the shop, the shepherd on the hill-side, the fisherman by the seashore, all these things were but patterns of a great spiritual reality—God. He loved society and ate and drank the ordinary things with men and women of all classes. The very basis of His being was the Love of God ; by this criterion He judged every question. The problem of sabbath-keeping was no problem to Him, the difficulties of social conduct simply did not exist ; He merely asked, " What would a loving man do ? " The dark questionings as to the future life were lit up and dispelled by his knowledge of the Love of the Lover of All. As He preached so He lived. Everything that He said of His Father He did Himself. His life became a Vision of God on earth. This Life of His, too, made Him quite fearless both in His positive teaching and in His attacks upon the abuses of His time.

His contemporaries could not make Him out. When He spoke of Jerusalem and the coming disasters they said He was a Jeremiah. His power, His eloquence, His courage recalled Elijah or John the

## 66 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

Baptist. Some said He was too worldly and cared too much for food and wine. Some thought He was mad. But His immediate friends were convinced that He was the Hope of Israel, and they pictured to themselves a glorious kingdom, of which their master was to be ruler. He puzzled them, sometimes filling them with the highest hopes, sometimes telling them of His death. But puzzled, confused, hoping, doubting, despairing, wondering, they loved Him with their whole souls, they worshipped the very ground He stood on, He was the whole world to them. Then He was murdered. . . .

After His death His followers were left with a most perplexing but vivid impression of His life, and one can well imagine how they would love to tell over and over again the stories of the things "that Jesus began to do and teach until the time that He was taken up," and how, as they did so, all kinds of exaggerations would creep in and some would ask, "Was it really true that He did this and that?"

Perhaps these stories and sayings were written down by authority in various

“churches,” in order that they might be read at the gatherings of Christians scattered abroad, and especially at the Eucharist. The first editor of these stories known to us produced St. Mark’s Gospel. This was taken and edited by St. Matthew and St. Luke, who added to it a good deal which they gained from another source common to them both (known as Q by the critics), and also some original matter.

It was in the editing of these stories and sayings that the views of the writers became reflected upon the teaching of the Master.

He had taught them of the horrible disasters, of the judgment upon Jerusalem and the wars and rumours of wars. They took this, and in their perplexity about His death, combined with the general Jewish belief that these catastrophes were signs of the end of the world and the coming of the Messiah in clouds to judge the world, they turned His teaching as to God’s moral judgments which happen every day into a promise of a world catastrophe. The marvel is that in so doing, although they misinterpreted their Master,—how often He was astonished at their slowness to

## 68 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

understand !—they have given us the ideal spiritual picture true to life of the Son of God teaching by His life what the life of the practical sons of God in this world should be.

After the manner of the East He laid down, in astonishing paradoxes, short pithy sentences which would stick in men's minds and make them think, the ideals for which He lived.

When He told them to take no thought for the morrow, it was neither because there was to be no morrow nor because saving money was wrong, it was because they were living in a Father's world and therefore anxiety was a stupid sin. When He said that they were to give to those that asked of them, turn the other cheek, it was not because the end of the world was coming and therefore it did not matter, it was because He knew meanness to be a soul-destroying vice, and that it is not always a sign of greatness to want to get your own back.

Because He did not directly deal with the problems of sex, of labour, of wages, of property, it in no way follows that He was only interested in the short period before

the final catastrophe, it was simply because He felt that if His great spiritual ideal possessed mankind these problems would hardly arise.

Was it a Myth ? Is this amazing living portrait of a Man only an example of the inventive genius of Jewish artists ? Could such power come forth from a mere hallucination ? The verdict of human experience is No !

“ Finding, following, keeping, struggling,  
Is he sure to bless ?  
Angels, Martyrs, Prophets, Virgins,  
Answer ‘ Yes.’ ”

And who is He ? Not the philosophic “ Logos ” ; not “ the Ideal ” of Plato ; but the warm, living, tender, loving Jesus of the Gospels, who lived in Palestine 1900 years ago ; the Christ to whom all Scripture points, who was dead and is alive for evermore, our Lord and our God.

## THE BATTLE OF LOOS

*September, 1915.*

A REMARKABLE human document, and one of the greatest interest to the psychologist, would be produced if a thousand or so men were asked to state what they felt like as they went up to an attack, and what comforted them.

I heard of a major telling how, as he went along the road into Loos with his battery amid the horrible sights of the debris of waggons, horses and men, he began to feel sick and fearful, till he heard one of his men, a country boy who had never seen a battle before, saying to his pal—"Look, Bill, that bloke has copped it, had his napper knocked off." Then all his discomfort disappeared.

I myself began to feel the unpleasant sinking within me as the noise of the guns grew louder, but as we came into Vermelles I saw a crowd standing round a field and a football match going on between some of the troops waiting to go up. In a moment

I felt light as air, as if a great load had dropped off my back.

. . . . .

Brigade Headquarters and also the Advanced Dressing Station were at Le Roultre Farm, the remains of what must have been a very prosperous homestead in the days before the war. Here we arrived just as it was growing dark. The air was full of the roar and flash of many guns, and every now and then there would be a scream and a crash as a German shell came over. The road to the farm was a mass of ammunition waggons and ration carts. Lying around in all sorts of places and attitudes, some on stretchers, some on the ground, were the wounded. Every now and then a car would turn up and take away some of them. It was chilly and the rain began to come down. There was no cover for the wounded.

. . . . .

The man who has not taken part in a battle can never imagine the number of contretemps that occur. Someone came to me in the morning and asked me about the burial of the dead ; there were many

lying out near the wire. Where would I like them collected and the grave dug? I only knew of one central place easily recognizable, so I chose the Lone Tree as the site. The unfortunate part was that everyone in the brigade who had to fix a rendezvous chose the same spot.

The picture of that Lone Tree that September morning beggars all description. If an artist had wished to paint the desolation of Hell he could not have found a better subject. A month before it had been a fairy vision of heavenly loveliness; a queer-shaped old tree standing by itself on a carpet of wondrous beauty, poppies, daisies and cornflowers, a miracle of colour. Now everything is dead, the tree is dead, the carpet is brown, upon it lie many khaki-covered forms, a month ago in the full beauty of English manhood, now broken, muddy, cold, gory, horrible. Among them, for the doctors had chosen the same place as I had, lie the wounded, grey-faced, shivering—some of them had been out for nights and days: standing around is a fatigue party—they also had come to the same spot—carrying bombs and ammunition. In the foreground of the picture, towards the

enemy, there is the same brown carpet; beyond, the ruins of the barbed-wire entanglements, and beyond again, the white chalk line—the old German front trench. Such was the picture.

I started to work getting the remains of the gallant men put into the graves, laying them side by side in the great hole that we had dug. The Huns, however, had spotted the crowd and the digging, and started shelling the tree, so we put the wounded into the grave and there we lay, living and dead side by side till it was all over. Luckily they had not a very accurate gun, as they were first fifty yards short and then fifty yards over, but never split the difference. There were few casualties, but one poor fellow who had been brought in after lying out for three days and nights was killed. "Seems 'ard lines after all that," said one of the bearers.

In the Hell of such horrors the glory of war comes to birth. Out of the pain and peril of child-birth sons of God are born. From the horror of Calvary the Christian faith comes to be.

Down near Neuve Chapelle there grew a daffodil of extraordinary size and beauty ;

## 74 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

it was watched and tended with great care by the regiment that held the line. Presently some sappers came along and started digging. The owners of the daffodil begged for mercy on their flower. "Sorry, sir, our orders is to dig a trench just 'ere." They dug and found that the daffodil was rooted in the foot of a dead Indian.

No one quite suspected the heroism and gallantry of the average man, it was like a seed lying dormant. Planted in the dung-heap of war it brought forth abundantly. Many a man who because of his shyness and reserve was looked down upon by his acquaintances, or despised himself in times of peace, has found a new life in the midst of death.

Some also found the soil too rich and rotted away.

. . . . .

Throughout the day we journeyed to and fro carrying the wounded from the Tree down to the Routoire Farm, where the doctors attended to their wounds. The Germans evidently had had a real fright early in the battle and taken their guns away. They were soon beginning to bring them back and make things most un-

pleasant round our farm. I defy anyone to get into a situation where he feels more awkward than when, half-way up into an ambulance lifting a stretcher case, he hears a big shell coming and knows it is coming pretty near. We had no cars smashed, but once a big fragment came through the roof with a crash, but fell between the stretchers on the floor.

It is hard for the civilian at home to realize the difficulties of getting the wounded out of a battle. It generally means a carry of, say, two miles. It takes four men to a stretcher. If there are fifty cases a distance of, say, 100 miles loaded and 100 miles empty has to be covered before all are brought in. To carry a dead weight over rough ground for two miles is real work. By nightfall we were all done up and ready for a rest, but just as we were congratulating ourselves that our work was finished there came an urgent message that there were a lot more wounded waiting for us. Carry any more we could not. There was only one alternative, to take up the big Red Cross waggon. None of our party will, I think, forget the anxieties of the trip. It was dark and rainy. There was a good

## 76 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

deal of shelling, and every now and then a bullet would "phut" past. We had to cross three lines of trenches which had been bridged by the sappers with temporary wooden bridges, the surfaces of which were so slippery that the horses could scarcely get a footing, so narrow that there was never more than an inch to spare : once or twice I shut my eyes and waited for the crash. It was a very fine bit of driving that we managed the journey twice without an accident, and everyone must have said "Thank God" from his heart as we arrived safely without casualties at the ruins of the farm at 2 a.m. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet.

. . . . .

One hears on all sides stories of gallant deeds, of sacrifice and heroism. Let us pray that the Hell in the other life may bring out unsuspected good from the sufferers there. The Hell of this war certainly reveals the divinity of man.

But is war a necessity ? Must the finest virtues decay in the times of peace ? Does the Author of all good plan war and its sufferings for the perfecting of the race ? Were the Germans and Nietzsche right

## THE BATTLE OF LOOS 77

after all about the glory of war? Is it not rather through our blindness that we fail to find, through our slackness that we do not seize, through our cowardice that we do not face real opportunities of glorious service in that sphere where there are no medals to be earned but only the approval of Him "that seeth in secret"?

## OF A SERVICE I OVERHEARD AND THOUGHTS ARISING THEREFROM

POPERINGHE,

*Ascensiontide, 1916.*

I HAD a very fine battalion service under the trees on Ascension Sunday, some six or seven hundred men and nearly all the officers being present. I seemed to strike a chord of sympathy in their hearts when I told them that they must think of the Master not as far away—as if Heaven was somewhere “up there”—but as always present, their great Captain, by their side, to make them brave and strong like Him if they would have Him, and that “up there” meant that they must live high and think high in His Service. As I was preaching I overheard the congregation of some seventy Nonconformists, who had been paraded in another field, singing the hymn we had just sung, and I heard afterwards that their Chaplain had preached to them on the

## OF A SERVICE I OVERHEARD 79

Continual Presence of Christ in the heart of every man and of how they must live and die, if need be, for Him. I suppose that, as I had done, he also had prayed for all sharing and suffering in the war and for those at home. Here then was a phenomenon—seventy men marched away from their fellows to take part in an almost exactly similar service—a Minister of similar education to mine hurrying round all day and taking perhaps ten services a few hundred yards away from me, teaching much the same things, singing many of the same hymns, and praying for similar objects. Why in the world were we doing this? It was because of our unhappy divisions. He was a Wesleyan, I was Church of England. What a problem it is! I am certain that we need a Visible Church; the Master talked of building it on a foundation, He did not sow His message broadcast, He most carefully trained a small body of men to be the first nucleus. He knew what was in man. Why, even we, when we want to interest people in kindness to children, have to have a Society, the S.P.C.C., with meetings: how much more in the training of men, women and

children in their approach to God, in the building of them up in the faith. And unity means strength, the whole Church is weakened by these divisions ; I daren't be disloyal, I cannot act as if divisions didn't matter, but I am sure that the problem is urgent. How can we regain unity ?

If you have lost your way and cannot get home, your best hope is to go back to the cross-roads and think again. When we go back to the historical cross-roads we find that the great schisms affecting English Christianity have been due to a desire for liberty.

The Reformation was a struggle partly for freedom of thought and partly for freedom for each nation to govern its own affairs without interference from a foreigner.

Presbyterianism was based on the desire to have the chief Presbyter elected by the church year by year. It was a democratic movement intended to abolish the autocracy of the Bishop.

The Wesleyan movement demanded liberty for a man so moved to preach and pray in his own words, and, wherever he could gain an audience, to give his witness to the Love of the Master.

## OF A SERVICE I OVERHEARD 81

The result has been a vast number of sub-divisions ; a source of dismay to those who love Christ, and of derision and scorn to those who do not.

History seems to justify the existence of Bishops as making for unity, and the problem is whether episcopacy is incompatible with the principles of self-government, whether our present method of using episcopacy is unalterable because the best.

The ideal of the Bishop plainly is that he should be a man of spiritual genius and power, living in closest touch with the Divine, travelling around his diocese to be "overseer" of the spiritual work and to confirm the churches.

In practice in the Church of England he may be all this, but he is also responsible for the finances and organization of the diocese ; to him come difficult questions of every kind for decision, he has to make the majority of the appointments, he often has a seat in the Upper House, and he has to entertain the leading people of the Church.

The main results of this policy are that we have killed with overwork some of our great scholars and spoilt their work, we have

## 82 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

burdened the souls of our saints with details and anxieties of finance and organization, and last and most disastrous of all, we have drawn the distinction between the Bishop and the prophet. The ideal for the Bishop has been that he should be popular with all classes, that he should keep peace in all his borders: that of the prophet is that he should live close to God and catch a message from Him, and, having caught it, deliver it like Christ, regardless of all consequences. Surely this uncompromising courage is what we should expect from our Bishops, for the Cross of Christ does not mean popularity and safety, it stands not for compromise but crisis. But we have no right to expect it from men so overburdened with anxieties and labours and responsibilities.

. . . . .

I sometimes catch a vision of the New Church of England. I see a large gathering of men and also of women of every class and walk of life: they are the elected representatives of the Church, come together in synod for the election of their bishop. They have all received the Holy Communion

## OF A SERVICE I OVERHEARD 83

together and prayed for the guidance of God in this great matter. No one is scheming to gain the position, because the bishop is not to be a Prince of the Church, he is to be the Servant. There is no electioneering of the parties High or Low, because he will not have the power of appointment to livings ; that is done by an elected board in consultation with the parishioners concerned ; they need not consider whether he is a great scholar, because those problems of scholarship will be dealt with by an elected committee ; he need not have been a great organizer, for the elected finance board will see to that ; but that gathering of the Synod is longing to find a real man of God who may travel round among them simply as a man of God with a message given him by God. The powers of the new bishop will be enormous, not those of the autocrat, but of a Father full of the Power of the Spirit.

“The Palace” will always be full of guests, not only the leading laymen of the diocese, but any man or woman, rich or poor, who needs rest for soul and body will invite himself and come.

Moreover I seem to see in all the churches

## 84 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

one set service, the Supper of the Lord, fixed at some time of day when all can come, for this is the common meal, the Communion of God and man, the Great Thanksgiving, the Sacrament of Unity. Otherwise there seems a curious laxity ; at the great cathedrals there is gorgeous music and colour, everything to fill the soul with awe ; in other churches the minister seems to have clung to the old Matins and Evensong, only he chooses most carefully lessons and psalms which deal with human life to-day—sometimes he even says extempore prayers, the people seem to be helped by this ; in many places I seem to see no set order or arrangement, only a sort of family prayers in such simple language, with old familiar hymns, and a message to the souls of the people.

Sometimes information is laid against innovators, and the Synod is called upon to judge, but they never seem to ask whether it was so done in the first five centuries or the time of Elizabeth, but whether men and women are so led to Christ.

This is my dream. “ A mere dream ! ” you will say. But sometimes dreams come true.

## CONCERNING OUR UNHAPPY DIVISIONS

POPERINGHE,

*Whitsuntide, 1916.*

ANY fool can be an agnostic. I can't think why they pretend to be so clever. But it is a perplexing thing to be a Christian. It is more perplexing to be a Churchman. It is most perplexing to be a Chaplain uprooted from your old surroundings and habits and planted out in the midst of a great war. One seems to get a new angle of vision for the most familiar texts and beliefs of the Bible. It is most perplexing.

I have been thinking and preaching about the great vision of the last days by the Prophet Joel, where he foretells the out-pouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, and have explained it to mean that before the coming of the Master it was thought that only the great leaders and thinkers could be inspired by the Divine Spirit, but that now He was to be the Guide and

## 86 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

Counsellor and Friend of every man and every woman, black or white, slave or free : that now not only every General but every private soldier who was intent on doing God's will could be certain of this Companion.

This at once raises the problem of the Church. What is the limitation to this great promise ?

I have been taught that the *pledged channel of grace*, i.e. of the power of the Spirit, is through the Catholic Church, a heritage direct from the Apostles through the unbroken succession of Bishops : that only sacraments administered by episcopally ordained men are "valid." Now this word "valid" is evidently a Latin legal word. The implication of its use is that an agreement between two parties only "holds good" when both keep the conditions. The Catholic idea undoubtedly is that unless we use outward and visible signs in a specially God-appointed way we have no right to expect health for our souls.

There is much in nature to make us think this view to be right. God has ordained in this world that if we want certain results

we must employ certain methods, that we cannot say that anything will do, because the best results can only be obtained by the strictest obedience to His Laws as revealed in the natural world. There is the Way and the Truth—only one—and the way is narrow. But my mind immediately has misgivings, I cannot think the logic quite sound. For, first, it is extremely dangerous to take an argument from material processes and apply it in the spiritual sphere. Secondly, even granting that episcopacy is essential for the development of the true life, so also are all the complex virtues of the Christian life, and it would be ridiculous to maintain that a church whose ministry was apostolic but whose members were superstitious, ignorant and uncharitable, was more in union with God than one with no ministry at all, but whose members were as a whole full of the fruits of the Spirit. Thirdly, we must judge by results. A priori we may think that the episcopal ministry is the only “valid” one, that is, the only one which can be sure of God’s Spirit working with it. But when we face the facts we know that beyond all question God has displayed His approval

## 88 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

of many "irregular" churches. He has blessed their work.

This means that we cannot claim episcopacy as essential to the church, however much we may feel sure that it is for its benefit.

We seem to be placed in exactly the same position as were the apostles of the early church. They were Jews in religion who thought that they only differed from the Chief Priests in that they believed that the crucified Jesus was The Christ raised from the dead to be the fulfilment of all their scriptures. As Jews they thought that the Jewish Law which demanded circumcision was divine and therefore eternal. They could not imagine anyone being admitted to the church unless he became subject to the Divine law. Then came the case of Cornelius, which was made a test case. Peter and his witnesses were perfectly certain that he and his family had received the Holy Ghost. After hearing the story the Church Assembly at once agreed that the case was settled; that is to say, in view of the fact that the Spirit of God was not denied to the uncircumcised they agreed that the keeping of the Law which

## OUR UNHAPPY DIVISIONS 89

they had thought divine and eternal was not essential for the Christian. This was the beginning of real Catholicism.

Every earnest Christian longs for unity. Is there not here some possibility not of compromise but of comprehensiveness? Must not the Catholic, in view of the facts, abandon his belief that episcopacy is the very essence of the church? Could not the Presbyterian, also in view of the fact that the absence of episcopacy makes for disunion, agree that episcopacy is beneficial for the church, and therefore in accordance with the Divine will? Would he not submit to ordination, not as a matter of principle, because he doubted his own position, but as a sacrifice to his yearning for unity? The Catholic in ordaining him would not deny the "validity" of his previous orders, that he would say was proved by the blessing of God on his work.

But before these things could come to pass there would have to be a revolution in the Church of England. No "free" churchmen would tolerate either the anachronism of State establishment or the sale of advowsons or the parson's freehold

## 90 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

or the inequalities of stipends or the autocracy of Bishops, which means the denial of the priesthood of the laity in the government of their church.

This would be a great adventure, but Christ wants adventurers.

Many things which before the war were thought impossible are accepted without comment to-day. Is it too much to hope that the Church may have the courage to shake off the shackles of the past and use them as stepping-stones in her forward march in the Life of the Spirit ?

## HARVEST ON THE SOMME— AND ELSEWHERE

*September, 1916.*

SEPTEMBER on the Somme! There are few things more lovely than harvest-time in Picardy. You can stand on the hills round Amiens and for miles and miles before your eyes there is spread out a panorama of gold—the golden corn: some of it is cut, it is lying in sheaves in regular lines, just as the machine mowed it down: a few months ago it was just bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some other grain; it was cast into the muddy earth in the toil and hardship of the spring and winter. Now it has increased beyond measure: the joy of harvest is here.

Come with me for a walk only a few miles, and I will show you the other Picardy in September. You will have to come carefully and for a while in a trench or you will be shot at. There is a war on. After a time you may look over the

## 92 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

trench, but only for a moment. The sun of September is shining—September in Picardy ; the keen air of autumn kisses your face, but you will see no corn, only brown sheaves lying in regular order as the machine-gun mowed them down—the gallant men of Britain, lying face down towards the foe in a medley of broken wire and ruined land. Here indeed is the harvest of sorrows.

. . . . .

How the Master loved the doings on the farm. Never once does He mention His carpentry, the toiling indoors at the saw and the plane—perhaps He never did it—but nature, the growth of things, the mystery, the beauty, the variety of life—what a place these had in His mind. It was to Him the open book of God. He had a great idea about the harvest which perhaps may comfort you when you pop back into the trench with your eyes full of the sadness of the sight. The Greeks who had come up to the feast had been brought to Him by Philip ; the sight of them brings to His mind the vision of the Glorious Kingdom at hand ; “Now is the Son of

Man glorified," He said. But how was it to be brought about, how was He to serve His nation best? The answer He gives is shocking in its originality. He will die for it. The grain must be buried before it can grow: "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." The idea horrifies Him as much as the sight over the trench does you. "Now is My soul troubled and what shall I say?" Shall I say, "Father, save Me from this hour"? No; "for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." He was right—we should have thought that He would have best served His land by preaching, teaching and healing, we know now that it was the lifting up from the earth which drew men to Him. This was one of the greatest discoveries in the world's history, that a man may serve his country and his cause better by dying for it than by living for it. How impossible it seems! But the most extraordinary thing about this world is that nearly all your first thoughts about it are wrong. You think that the sun goes round the earth, on whose flat surface you are standing. Not at all:

you are hanging on by your feet to a huge ball hurrying through space. You listen to a pianist at his art and you think that the music is in the notes ; you are wrong. The music is in your head ; mere waves in the ether, some long, some short, set up by the vibrating of the wire, they are caught by the mechanism of your ear and carried to your brain to give you the sensation of sound. You walk in your garden, you look at a rose. "What a beautiful colour it has," you say. Wrong again : it merely reflects rays of light from the sun which irritate your optic nerves and give you the impression of colour, but the colour is not in the rose, it is in your head. You sit down in a chair. "I like something solid to sit on," you say. "Solid !" says the scientist, "not at all ; your chair is better described as a collection of miniature solar systems. There are myriads of particles of matter vibrating one with the other : it is the rapidity of their movements which makes you think your chair solid. Your sense impression was quite wrong."

Now Christ seems to say that your first ideas about life are almost certain to be wrong. You might have an intuitive

genius for Life as Beethoven had for music, so that at the age of four he could play the piano and compose—but you would be one in a million. As an ordinary child you would admire mere size and bodily strength ; unless you were taught otherwise you would grab all you could get ; growing up you would think athletic prowess or popularity the be-all and end-all of life. Then you might think that life consisted in large possessions or high position. It is the obvious thing to think so. Your disillusionment would cause you much agony of mind if delayed till the summit of your ambition were reached. The very thing which you expected to give you the fulness of joy might become only as a bitter fruit in your mouth. No, to really enjoy life, to really live, you have got to be converted, to change your point of view, you have got to see that the life of getting is mere savagery, that he that seeketh to gain his life shall lose it. The politician, the preacher, the musician, the painter who has his eye on the immediate reward of money, position or popularity, will probably get what he wants, but he will lose his real life, he will have laboured for the meat which perisheth and the

## 96 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

product of his toil will bear the hallmark. Cast your mind back over the great names of the past, names written in the book of life. How many can you think of who were born and lived in comfort and ease? With most of them it was a story of struggle and poverty, of hatred and misunderstanding. Many were martyred for their beliefs; their death was considered to mark the ruin of their cause, but that very way of going did more for that which they held dear than all the efforts of their lives. It was the supreme thing. This is what St. Paul meant by his phrase "the foolishness of God." It was the maddest thing ever done to be crucified. But it was Divine Wisdom.

Now look up again over the edge of the trench: look at those brown bundles, see that mangled mass, watch that crow pecking—don't blink, face it all out. If you think that it is only the harvest of the selfish will-to-get which for a hundred years has enslaved the minds of the people of the West, you will go back along the trench and out into the open rolling country amid the loveliness of the harvest fields broken-hearted with curses on your

## HARVEST ON THE SOMME 97

lips and tears in your eyes. But you will be a fool. This is not only the harvest. It is the spring-time. The seeds of sacrifice are being sown, they are fertilized by the blood of the martyrs. We sow in tears but some day we shall reap in joy.

## ON DISCIPLINE

WE are now in the midst of a gigantic social experiment—the experiment of discipline. For many years experts have been deploring the lack of it among our people. The trade-union leader, the bishop, the county squire, the employer of labour, each in his own department has noted that the gaining of liberty by the people has not been an unmixed blessing.

What an experiment this is. Five or six millions of extreme liberty-loving, go-as-you-please, anti-militarist Englishmen are under the iron discipline of the Army. There are some simple folk with a pious faith in the power of mechanism who think that this is bound to have an immense influence for good on the lives of those who have had the experience. They picture a mob of men and boys streaming out from factory, workshop, or football ground, dirty, ragged, slouching : they see them a few months later in khaki, smart, keen, orderly, marching with their heads erect—

disciplined. Surely this is permanent, they say, the England after the war will be a different place !

The great mistake of these visionaries is that they forget that there are two kinds of discipline, that from without and that from within.

The Army discipline, which is from without only, is wholly bad. A lad joins a regiment for one reason or another ; he finds the hand of the Sergeant-Major heavy upon him. For all kinds of, to him, purely imaginary offences he is put on extra drills, extra fatigues. It is the discipline of fear. He gradually becomes clever at devising ways and means of escaping attention. He learns to do just enough to avoid punishment. He becomes an "old soldier." When a new doctor is appointed he will turn up at sick parade, and if his reception is sympathetic he will on every possible occasion be there. It is for him that the penalty for desertion has to be so severe. When on the march the sight of the ambulance waggon or car close behind ensures his falling out. When his Company goes "over the top" he will trip and

## 100 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

fall almost at once into the nearest shell hole and remain there till the danger is over.

Moreover, in a much deeper way the demoralization of "slave" discipline is evident. There are three certain marks of a civilized human being. He must have, first, a language which adequately expresses his thoughts ; secondly, a respect for the rights of property ; and, thirdly, a feeling akin to worship for the honour of women.

Viewed in this light it seems as if the iron discipline of a regiment, which in some ways does so much, and without which no regiment can exist, leaves the character less controlled, an easier prey to the forces of barbarism, the "call of the savage" in those departments of life in which it is not exercised.

There are many who never get beyond the discipline which is from without. They will be a real danger to society after the war.

There is the discipline from within, which makes the ideal soldier perhaps the finest and most lovable of all men. He starts

simply doing all that he can in the regiment from sheer fear of "getting his name in the book," but gradually the spirit of "the regiment" begins to take hold of him; "the regiment" makes his pulse beat fast, he begins to be smart, keen and alert, not to avoid punishment, but for the sake of "the regiment." He loves it. This is the "perfect love which casteth out fear." His only fear is to dishonour "the regiment."

I myself have known men when really ill refuse to go sick because they wanted to keep up the regimental record for health; I have known them fall flat down in a half-faint when halted after a long march, having doggedly tottered on under their huge load, rather than fall out and be passed on the roadside by men of another battalion.

The men who are not possessed by this spirit of love have no escape from the fate of becoming "old soldiers." Of these there will undoubtedly be a great many when the war is over, but the real problem will be how to provide the ideal soldier with some real object of devotion which may replace his love for "the regiment" when he

returns to civil life. There will be thousands of these men, "the salt of the earth," who, having lost themselves in their loyalty to "the regiment," have found what life really is. When they return to the industrial war of individualism they will find a terrible gap in their lives. What is likely to be their way of escape?

First, there is the Trade Union to which a man may attach himself as to an army, in order that he may help the weaker members of his trade to earn a living wage, and the individual to receive justice against an extortionate employer. He will subscribe his hardly earned money, he will go out on strike and so lose money, in order to obtain for wage earners a greater liberty of life.

Secondly, there is the ideal employer. He will devote much thought to making the lives of his people healthy and happy. He will devote excess profits to giving them a share in the prosperity of the Company; he will, as a good Commanding Officer does, manage to let them know that he really cares for them and their families. A feeling of loyalty and pride in the concern, a sense of being "at home"

might so arise to relieve the monotony of the toil.

Thirdly, there is—dare I say it?—the Church of Christ. An ideal Christian has exactly the same spirit in his life as the ideal soldier.

There is, of course, the “old soldier” of Christ, the man who is always respectable, who never is discovered doing anything wrong, but who is hated and despised by all real men because his life is not based on love for the Master. He does as much harm to the religion of Christ as the regimental “old soldier” to the reputation of the Service. But the real Christian is quite different. His life is not one of fear, but one of love. He does not avoid sin for fear of punishment, but because he is in mortal terror of hurting his Master, letting his Captain down in the great war, damaging some brother or sister for whom his Friend died. His is the staggering fear of the lover.

We have had too much of the “old soldier” Christianity. What we want is the ideal young soldier, full of enthusiasm, to come in and take the old Church by storm and to it devote his energies and his

## 104 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

love, for in the Master he will find a Captain of whom he may be proud, and in His Service satisfaction for the deepest longings of his soul.

## ON COMPULSORY RATIONING, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

THIS outcry for compulsion of every kind is instructive. It marks a lower stage of life—the demand of the human mind for some authoritative statement as to the minimum required for the satisfaction of conscience. The labouring man has said again and again with regard to enlisting: “I will come willingly when I am fetched.” The ordinary civilian has begged for food tickets and compulsory rationing all round. The real patriot has said: “I do not care who goes or who stays behind, I will not be left out; I refuse to be denied the privilege of doing my part for the land I love in this great struggle; I do not care who saves or who does not, my country will be short of food; if I am the only one who cuts down his meals I shall not hesitate to make the sacrifice.” This is the right spirit.

The compulsionist says in his heart: “I do not want to fight, to give up my comfortable job and see the other man getting

it. I am not going to deny myself in food while my neighbour is having a good time. I want to have an easy conscience that I am fulfilling the official requirement, I do not wish to do more than I need."

It is exactly this spirit that infects religion in every age. The average man does not really love God, but he believes in Him, and in his heart of hearts fears Him ; he wants to be told authoritatively what he must do to be on the safe side.

This was the fault of the old Pharisee. He believed that all of a sudden the prophecy of Malachi would be fulfilled and the Messiah would come. In order to be ready for that day and safe he felt that he must keep the Law. This he did with immense pains and sacrifice, with the result that when Christ came he was blinded by his system. He had strangled his soul with red tape.

The first battle which the early Church of Christ had to fight was exactly this—were the new-born Christians to have the trammels of the old Law about them ? St. Paul with his wonderful spiritual experience says No. Unless you have got the light of the presence of God and a love for it within

you—which is what he meant by faith—all your righteousness is as filthy rags, nothing is any good at all. Once you have got that free spirit and have thrown away the haggling spirit of “salvation by contract,” you are saved.

The great victory was won, but had to be fought for again and again.

In the seventh century parts of the Church had sunk into the depths of immorality and superstition. Then arose the great figure of Mahomet. A religious reformer, fired with the vision of the majesty and justice of God, he swept away the immorality and heathenish polytheism of the decadent church, but he reintroduced “salvation by contract”—a certain minimum code of morality and worship which ensured the faithful a place in the Valhalla. The danger of these minimum codes is that they tend to become the maximum. Such is the indolence of human nature. Therefore the religion and morality of the Prophet is the same to-day as it was twelve hundred years ago.

The next epoch of importance was the Reformation. Throughout the Middle Ages the Roman Church had developed this

## 108 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

system of "salvation by contract" to a most remarkable extent. The rules made were in themselves excellent—in their results disastrous. The Church held the key of Heaven. It was a golden key. It is a good plan to fine yourself when you sin, to resolve that every time you commit an offence you will pay a certain sum of money to a charity. But this easily degenerated into a purchase of indulgences or permission of sin, of absolution or forgiveness of sin ; it even pursued the mortal into the realms of immortality, so that money paid for masses on earth was believed to ease the soul of the departed in the place of purgatory.

The Reformation was the struggle of Christian people to tear off the red tape of priestcraft which was strangling the life, to abolish the soul-destroying system of "salvation by contract," to enter upon the glorious liberty of the children of God.

This playing for safety, making the best of both worlds, is the great danger of all life.

M. Bergson has an instructive illustration of this in his *Creative Evolution*. He seems to imagine the material world as the revela-

## ON COMPULSORY RATIONING 109

tion of life thrusting out in every possible direction and taking to itself form. Thus the various species come to be. He then thinks of each species as thinking to itself, "What shall I do to be saved ; how shall I be safe in this struggle for life ? " This was the cry of the invertebrates, the jelly-fish, the worms. The first answer was, " I will grow a shell." The result was the crustaceans, the crabs, the molluscs, the snails. But this safety was purchased at the price of stagnation. You cannot expand if you are in a shell. You may be safe, but you are degraded. Real life is for him who will leave the safe slavery of Egypt and venture into the desert unknown in search of the promised land. In the history of species progress was for those who became mobile and dared bravely ; in the life story of the individual it is for him who leaves the safety of the ship and braves the waters to go to Jesus.

So long as a man's conduct is motivated by fear of suffering, whether in this world or the next, he will tend to play for safety, and the religions of authority will satisfy him completely. They will give him " salvation by contract." He will be satisfied by

## 110 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

a minimum code. But the moment the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shined in his heart, he will indeed go to the religions of authority, for they will show him the way the saints have trod, and ever on along The Way he will pursue his course through darkness and mist up the mountain side, unsatisfied : unceasingly as the migratory bird his heart will beat for that other country, till at last in the Everlasting Arms of the True Lover he will find his home.

## A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

SHADES of my ancestors ! What a wonderful world we live in. The aeroplane flying overhead has become so common that we cease to marvel at it ; the 12-inch naval gun, which throws over a thousand pounds of metal to a distance of twenty-eight miles, excites no wonder ; the wireless outside our dug-out amazes us no more than the daily postman. Our ancestors of a century ago would not know this earth. Steam and electricity have revolutionized everything. It is a new earth. The kettle-lid had moved piston-wise for countless centuries before Watt thought of utilizing the power of steam ; electricity seems to be one of the attributes of matter. It was discovery, revelation, which brought into play unknown forces and made a new earth.

It was so with the coming of Christ. There are still people to-day who think of God as a God of makeshifts, who fails at this and tries something else, who is most

## 112 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

like God, most glorious, if he stops the movement of a planet. The Angels singing over the Babe at Bethlehem declared Him most glorious when He lay among us helpless as a babe, needing our help, our service, working for us, loving us, suffering with us, dying for us—this is all that we can understand of the great mystery of mysteries—the God of Love.

I do not myself think that this Divine event essentially altered human nature, it was discovery, it was revelation, which brought into play forces unknown and made a new earth. That amazing Life, revealed by the few snapshots of the things that Jesus did and taught, was like a light shining in a dark place. Now we all know what life is. It is Jesus. The knowledge of God “in the face of Jesus Christ”; how this alters everything. If God is as like Jesus as any picture we can get of Him on this earth, how lovely life is, there is no room for fear or anxiety. It is a new earth.

Friend Milton, among others, led us into the disastrous error of thinking that before the coming of the Master, God was angry with us all and demanded punishment, that

He was only "satisfied" after the sinless victim had suffered agonies. Perish the thought in every form! God is Love. That is the revelation, that is the discovery that liberates great forces. It makes a new heaven and a new earth.

So it must be with the Sacraments.

People used to think that the ultimate fate of a child dying unbaptized was a problem. The weight of the great entail of sin since the days of Adam had been heaped up. It could only be broken by baptism. Such a horrid notion only shows how great is the danger of Logic and Legalism in the Life of the Spirit. God is Love. When the child is brought to baptism it is a great revelation of the eternal fact that God is stretching out his arms to every human soul even when unconscious, that there never can be a moment when the Divine is not there, for we are all His sons.

Similarly with the Sacraments of laying on of hands—Confirmation and Ordination. There is no magic about it, it does not mean that God withholds His Spirit from some and gives Him to others. It is rather the reaffirmation of a great pledge, the revelation of a great plan which liberates forces

## 114 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

unknown. For in the moment of crisis the boy or man is told by the authority of the Church of Christ in a manner to be heard, seen, and felt, that everyone who gives his heart to the service of the Master may be sure of the Spirit of the Master, for God is everywhere and God is Love.

It is the clinging of the human mind to magic that causes all our divisions.

Fancy arguing whether when a mouse eats the consecrated Bread it eats the Body of Christ.

How nearly the Romans are right about transubstantiation. Yet how disastrously wrong. The substance of everything, the underlying reality, the something hidden in all created things is God ; only by no magical words or ceremonies can you change that. " Nearer is he than breathing, closer than hands or feet. What can I think of which brings me closer to Him than the process of digestion? I eat and drink the consecrated Bread and Wine, it becomes part of my body, it enables me to express my thoughts, it is myself. What can I think of which means my brotherhood with all mankind more than eating together from the same loaf and drinking from the

same cup ? As the branches of the vine, so we are all one in the Unity of God."

There is no magic here. It is the revelation of an Eternal Fact, which, for those who receive it in the Spirit of the Master, liberates new forces, makes a new heaven and a new earth.

. . . . .

A new heaven and a new earth. For this do the stricken lands of the West cry out. And there are giant forces at work. The dying of our brothers has revealed once again two essential elements in human life : the need for God and the glory of sacrifice. These are the prerequisites of the new England that is to be.

"He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night ? Watchman, what of the night ? The watchman answered, The morning cometh, and also the night."

Sometimes I catch a vision of a land to the welfare of which men and women devote themselves as to the main object of life, where every boy and girl has a chance of full development of mind, soul, and body, where employers are proud of their men

## 116 VISIONS AND VIGNETTES

and their homes, and the employed of their masters, where the wealth of a nation is known to consist in the happiness and welfare of all its people, where strenuous, active, and full-blooded charity abounds.

A new heaven and a new earth.

Sometimes the vision fails and I see revolution and civil strife. I hear the rattle of the machine-gun and the cries of the wounded in our streets.

The choice is for the men and women of this generation.

It is chaos or Christ.

WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD  
PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND



